

19 October 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Charles A. Briggs
Executive Director

THROUGH : Thomas B. Cormack
Executive Secretary

FROM : J. Kenneth McDonald
Chief, History Staff

SUBJECT : Organization and Location of the DCI History Staff

1. This is to explain why I am convinced that the History Staff must remain independent and in the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence.

2. Although [redacted] last summer told me some of his ideas about expanding the Center for the Study of Intelligence, including an Anschluss of the History Staff, I have seen no written proposals. There are, however, two questions involved in [redacted] or any other proposals to change the DCI History Staff's present organization or location. These are:

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A. Whether to take the History Staff out of the Office of the DCI and place it in one of the four directorates.

B. Whether to consolidate the History Staff with other offices--e.g. DDI's Historical Intelligence Collection, DCI's Academic Coordinator, or DDA's Center for the Study of Intelligence and Studies in Intelligence.

3. In fact, the History Advisory Committee and top Agency management considered both of these issues carefully in 1980 when they examined the question of resurrecting a CIA History Staff. For clarity, I shall treat each of these two questions separately.

4. Since General Walter Bedell Smith created it in 1951, the History Staff has always been in the Office of the DCI, except for a sojourn in the Directorate of Administration from mid-1973 to the end of 1979. In DDA the History Staff withered away from a staff of 23 in 1973 to one historian--[redacted] -in 1975, and on to extinction at the end of 1979. In November 1980 when the History Staff was re-established, it returned to the Office of the DCI, as the all-Agency History Advisory Committee, chaired by [redacted] had recommended in its report to the DCI of 15 July 1980 (Attachment 1).

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5. In explaining its recommendation that the Office of CIA Historian be established "as an independent office under the Director of Central Intelligence," [redacted] Committee quoted generously from a 15 June 1980 study (Attachment 2) prepared for them by the distinguished military historian, Dr. Martin Blumenson, who served as consultant to the Agency and the Committee:

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"Certain characteristics of the Agency [Dr. Blumenson wrote], both structural and procedural, militate against the establishment and performance of an Historical Activity, and they should be clearly recognized and hardly minimized. Among them are the decentralized nature of the Agency's operational framework; the virtual independence of the major components; compartmentation control; the extreme sensitivity of much of the Agency's production; and the understandable reluctance, particularly on the part of the Directorate of Operations, to record actions and events."

6. To overcome these and other difficulties, Dr. Blumenson concluded that the Agency's Historical Activity should be "organizationally located at the top, as a separate entity directly under the Director." He found this essential first, "to break down the compartmentation control;" and secondly, "to indicate to the Agency that the Activity enjoys the fullest support and confidence at the highest level."

7. On 25 August 1980, in approving [redacted] Committee's recommendations, the DCI wrote to the DDCI:

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"Specifically, I think we should put the Historian in the Executive Secretariat....On the one hand, I think we'll need that proximity to the front office to attract a good Historian; on the other, it makes sense for the Executive Secretary to feel responsible for keeping the Historian posted on what is going on....I'd like to make the Historian an SIS position up to SIS-4 (that's GS-18 I hope)".

8. The Chief Historian was established as an SIS position, and I accepted the appointment on the assurance [redacted] and the members of the search committee that the History Staff was in the Office of the DCI, and that I would report to the DDCI and DCI. I can now observe that the History Staff's location with the Executive Secretary in the Office of the DCI has in fact supported its independent role, by giving us the benefit of Tom Cormack's counsel, as well as the important support of the Executive Registry in getting access to the documentation we need.

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9. My own two years' experience with the new History Staff, along with the History Staff's previous history from 1951 to 1979, fully confirm the wisdom of Dr. Blumenson, the History Advisory Committee, and top Agency management in opting in 1980 for an independent History Staff in the Office of the DCI. To write comprehensive and objective history, the History Staff must not be identified with or subordinate to any one of the four directorates, and it must have DCI-level access to documents and people across compartmentation lines. Our experience last winter with the proposed study of congressional relations demonstrates how even a topic accepted by all four Deputy Directors and the Executive Director (acting as CIA's History Advisory Board) still needs the imprimatur of the DDCI and DCI. As histories are produced, we shall need the same levels of approval in the review of manuscripts and for decisions on dissemination of the studies. In sum, the History Staff can only do its job if it has, and can clearly be seen to have, the full confidence and support of the DCI.

10. On the second question, there is little to recommend merging other components with the History Staff if the History Staff's proper location is in the Office of the DCI. Nevertheless, I should perhaps explain the

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implications for the History Staff of associating it with each of the offices that have apparently been discussed as candidates for consolidation in CSI.

11. Historical Intelligence Collection. Since the principal role of HIC's curator seems to be to maintain and build the collection, and to answer reference questions, HIC seems well placed now in DDI's Office of Central Reference organizationally, and adjacent to the CIA Library physically. Although a case could be made for putting the Historical Intelligence Collection under the History Staff, owning it would be more hindrance than help in our work. Moreover, I can see no advantages for either HIC or the History Staff in having both part of some other entity.

12. Coordinator for Academic Relations. This is an "outreach" function to universities, which seems properly placed in Public Affairs. It would appear foolhardy to associate this function with the History Staff, which has compelling reasons for not reaching out to provoke or encourage outside interest--especially from academics--in its classified internal work.

13. Studies in Intelligence. A case could be made for the History Staff to publish this professional journal, since Studies publishes a good deal of historical writing, and since the History Staff has published it in the past. Yet while it might be useful to have the Chief of the History Staff on the Board of Studies, I can find no advantages for either Studies or the History Staff in having both part of some other entity.

14. Center for the Study of Intelligence. The role of CSI seems to be to encourage and arrange certain types of relatively short-term internal individual research projects, to sponsor occasional external contract research, to organize both internal and external conferences, and to publish Studies in Intelligence. Association with CSI's "outreach" role (as in the forthcoming conference for university professors teaching intelligence courses) could jeopardize the History Staff's work, while CSI's internal training and fellowship programs have virtually nothing in common with our historical work in purpose, focus, organization or staffing.

15. In light of the disparate--and in some respects incompatible--roles of the History Staff and these other components, I can find no case for their consolidation under a new layer of administration. Moreover, for the History Staff to join CSI in DDA's Office of Training and Education would raise all the problems we identified in paragraphs 5-9 above, in discussing the vital importance of our present location.

16. The History Staff can best--and probably only--do its job by maintaining its independent role in the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence.

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J. Kenneth McDonald

Attachments

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